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ABSTRACT

The second year of operation of the Transition Program for Refugee Children (T.P.R.C.) is evaluated in this report. The program provides classes in English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) or content area instruction with an E.S.L. approach specifically designed to improve students' English language listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. The program also attempts to acclimatize students to American life and culture. Available data suggests that T.P.R.C. students are progressing in their knowledge of English syntax and mathematics. Generalizations about progress of the whole group are tentative, due to problems experienced in collecting information. Difficulties were aggravated further by the late receipt of funds. A further problem was that of identifying refugee students. The Immigration and Naturalization Service decides who should be awarded refugee status, but there is no accepted definition of refugee. (RDN)

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O.E.A. Evaluation Section Report

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THE TRANSITION PROGRAM

FOR

REFUGEE CHILDREN

1983-1984

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THE TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

Year of Operation:	1983-1984, second year of funding
Central Administration:	1171 65th Street, Room 502 Brooklyn, New York
Number of Participants:	813 students in grades 9 to 12
Participating Sites:	15 high schools in New York City (13 public, two private)
Contact Person:	Eli Plotkin, Program Manager H.S. Bilingual/E.S.L. Programs Division of High Schools New York City Public Schools

I. OVERVIEW

In its second year of operation, the Transition Program for Refugee Children (T.P.R.C.) continued to provide classes in English as a second language (E.S.L.) or content-area instruction with an E.S.L. approach specifically designed to improve participating students' English language listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities. The program also attempted to acclimate students to American life and culture.

Federal funding under the Refugee Act for New York City high schools, which totaled $126,958, was provided on a per capita formula based on the number of New York City students identified as refugees. However, as the federal definition of refugee is narrow, the actual number of refugee students served by the program is greater than the number on which funding was based. By federal guidelines, school personnel reported

813 refugees in the 15 schools with the largest populations. Funds were distributed according to the original estimate of the refugee population as follows:

--18 thousand dollars in instructional materials were distributed per capita to the 26 public and non-public schools that had five or more refugee students;

--one non-public school was assigned a paraprofessional;

--six teaching positions were split among the 13 public schools with the largest refugee populations.

Of the 13 public schools provided with teaching positions, six offered one class each, four offered two classes each, two offered three classes each, and one offered ten classes.

Given the limited nature of the funding, Refugee Act monies were necessarily combined with funds from other sources in the individual schools. As a result, the services provided to an entitled student varied considerably from site to site. The necessary mixing of funds, variations in services, and inconsistent receipt of funding, made it impossible to isolate the effect of T.P.R.C. funding for evaluation purposes.

Two schools, Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt, had the largest populations of refugee students. Their combined total of 293 represents 36 percent of the total number of students reported. Table 1 presents the number of program students by site, and Table 2 presents a breakdown of the students by grade.

Program students were fairly evenly distributed among grades nine through eleven, which had over 200 students each. Few program students (64) were in the twelfth grade.

TABLE 1

Number of Program Students by Site

School	Number of Students
Seward Park	41
Martin L. King	60
Park West	59
C. Columbus	58
Walton	61
T. Roosevelt	157
Midwood	26
New Utrecht	21
Fort Hamilton	23
Franklin D. Roosevelt	136
Long Island City	46
Newtown	34
Grover Cleveland	35
Solomon Schechter	12
Free School	44
TOTAL	813

TABLE 2

Number of Program Students by Grade

Grade	Number of Students
9	264
10	273
11	212
12	64
TOTAL	813

II. FINDINGS

This section presents the assessment instruments and procedures, and the test results used to evaluate student achievement in 1983-84. The data set for the Transition Program for Refugee Children was assembled by matching a Division of High Schools roster of participating students to the Office of Educational Assessment high school data base containing Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test (CREST) scores and the New York City Reading Test and New York City Mathematics Test scores. Of the 813 students in the program, complete CREST data were available for 240 students in the fall and 228 in the spring. To provide an alternative indicator of English achievement for students for whom CREST data were unavailable, a match was done to seek New York City Reading Test scores. However, students who were missing CREST scores did not have New York City Reading Test scores either. Scores on the New York City Mathematics Test were available for 160 students.

The number of cases with complete test data identified by the computer matches was low. Errors in data entry generally account for some loss of information, especially when files are matched, but test scores may not have been reported for many program students. The possible reasons for this are many: some students may have been absent for testing; others may not have taken the city-wide reading and math pre-tests because they entered school late in the year; and many would have been excused from the city-wide tests due to their recent immigrant status. Because attrition may not have been an entirely random process, the resulting subset of students for whom complete data are available may not be representative of the program population.

ACQUISITION OF ENGLISH SYNTAX

The CREST, used to measure English language achievement, was developed by the New York City Public Schools to measure mastery of the E.S.L. curriculum objectives at the high school level. It is the instrument used to assess English language acquisition in Chapter I E.S.L. programs in New York City. There are four items for each objective, and mastery of an objective is achieved when three of these items are answered correctly. The test has three levels: beginning (I), intermediate (II), and advanced (III). The maximum score on Levels I and II is 25, while the maximum score on Level III is 15.

In the absence of a criterion set as program objective, the city-wide objective for Chapter I E.S.L. students (mastery of one CREST objective for every four weeks of school attendance) was used to judge program outcomes. The CREST was administered to T.P.R.C. students at the beginning and end of each semester. Mean differences between pre-test and post-test were calculated to represent the gain score. Since the test's levels are not equated vertically, it was impossible to measure gains for students who changed levels. Extensive information on CREST objectives and psychometric properties appear in the Technical Manual, New York City English as a Second Language Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test.*

Examination of Table 3 reveals that, overall, students generally met the objective in both fall (1.46 objectives per month) and spring (1.18 objectives per month). Students tested on Levels I and II mastered

*Board of Education of the City of New York, Division of High Schools, 1978.

over 1.6 objectives per month of attendance in the fall term. Those students tested on these same levels in the spring mastered an average of 1.4 objectives per month. Students tested on Level III gained approximately 0.8 objectives per month of attendance during both fall and spring terms.

TABLE 3

Results of the Criterion Referenced English Syntax Test

(T.P.R.C. Students Pre- and Post-Tested on Same Test Level)

Test Level	Number of Students	Average Number of Objectives Mastered: Pre	Post	Average Objectives Mastered*	Average Months of Treatment	Average Objectives Mastered Per Month
			Fall			
I	79	10.30	15.88	5.58	3.30	1.69
II	105	11.96	17.20	5.24	3.21	1.63
III	56	9.25	11.91	2.66	3.27	0.81
TOTAL	240	10.78	15.53	4.75	3.25	1.46
			Spring			
I	63	11.05	15.52	4.47	3.22	1.39
II	86	14.50	18.87	4.37	3.20	1.40
III	79	9.28	11.76	2.46	3.19	0.77
TOTAL	228	11.74	15.48	3.74	3.20	1.18

*Post-test minus pre-test.

Students tested on Levels I and II, therefore, exceeded city-wide Chapter I guidelines which call for a gain of one CREST objective for every month of attendance. Level III students approached but did not meet these guidelines, partly because it takes longer to master an objective at that level. The Chapter I objective assumes that progress in the the acquisition of English syntactic skills is linear; the achievement of Level III students suggests that it is not.

MATHEMATICS ACHIEVEMENT

Mathematics achievement was measured with the New York City Mathematics Test, a New York-normed version of the Stanford Test of Academic Skills (TASK), which is designed to measure general mathematics competence. It emphasizes arithmetic and numeric concepts and applications with minor emphasis on algebra, geometry, and measurement. The TASK, which has two forms, is a two-level test. Level I is designed for grades eight, nine, and ten; Level II for grades eleven and twelve and junior college level. The TASK was normed on two national samples.*

Effect size was calculated for each grade level following the procedure recommended by Cohen.** An effect size for correlated t-test is a ratio of the average gain to the standard deviation of the gains. Unlike the t-test, it is freed of sample size. Effect size provides

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*Further information is available from the Psychological Corporation, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44130.

**J.Cohen: Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences (Revised Edition). New York: Academic Press, 1977, Chapter 2

additional substance to the analysis as it may be interpreted in light of Cohen's recommendations:

.20 = small effect size

.50 = moderate effect size

.80 = large effect size

Results of this test are presented in Table 4. Refugee Program students manifested statistically significant raw score gains in grades ten and eleven. Effect sizes for these grades were moderate. Results for a small group of ninth-grade students did not reach statistical significance and the accompanying effect size was correspondingly small.

TABLE 4

Mathematics Achievement

Significance of the Total Raw Score Differences Between Initial and Final Test Scores of Students on the New York City Mathematics Test, by Grade

		Pre-Test		Post-Test			
Grade	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	Effect Size
9	33	26.4	10.5	27.8	9.6	1.4	.18
10	62	28.0	10.0	30.7	9.2	2.7**	.42
11	65	21.8	9.7	25.2	9.2	3.5**	.54

**Significant at the .01 level.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The available data suggest that, in the second year of funding, T.P.R.C. students are progressing in their knowledge of English syntax and in mathematics. Nevertheless, although the program students met New York City guidelines for English language achievement, complete data concerning the CREST and New York City Mathematics Test are not available for enough students to accurately evaluate achievement in these areas.

The sources of the difficulty in collecting information on T.P.R.C. students city-wide are many, and have been indicated in the introductory section of this report. The number of students with missing or incomplete scores, however, suggests that efforts should continue to be made in the participating schools to test all students and report the information as completely as possible.

Clearly, the limited number of cases reported indicates that generalizations about the progress of the whole group of students should be made with caution, at best. In addition, the combination of funds to create coherent academic programs, though it is educationally correct and sensible, makes the attribution of growth to an individual funding source questionable. A better approach to the evaluation of the progress made by T.P.R.C. students would be to conduct a global assessment of the delivery of services to LEP students across funding sources.

Another issue involves the implementation of services supported by the Refugee Act. Funding for the 1983-84 academic year was received

after the school year had begun, making it difficult to plan for the optimal use of the funds. This might have resulted, for example, in programs not being able to identify and place staff in the fall, possibly resulting in less systematic or extensive services during the year due to the lack of personnel. Clearly, timely provision of funding would improve the planning and implementation of services to T.P.R.C. students.

A final issue is the identification of refugee students. The Immigration and Naturalization Service decides who should be awarded refugee status, but there is no accepted definition of refugee. The result is that, while there technically may be refugees from allied countries such as Greece or Turkey, teachers do not think of them as refugees. On the other hand, students from Haiti and Cuba, who may not be awarded refugee status, are often considered refugees by teachers because of newspaper references to these immigrants as "refugees."